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The United States and Armaments.

In view of the fact that the subject of armaments is sure to come up in some form and constitute perhaps one of the most urgent and possibly troublesome problems at the approaching Hague Conference, the question naturally arises, "What attitude should the delegates from the United States take on the subject?"

It has been heretofore generally assumed that the question is one which belongs exclusively to the great military powers of Europe and that our government, because of the relative smallness of its armament, should abstain from taking part in any discussion of the subject. This was the position taken by the United States delegation at The Hague in 1899. They took no part in the discussions which then occurred. Though concurring in the conclusions of the First Committee "that the proposals of the Russian representatives for fixing the amounts of effective forces and of budgets, military and naval, for periods of five and three years, cannot now be accepted, and that a more profound study on the part of each state concerned is to be desired," the delegation, in its statement on the subject, said that it wished to place upon the record "that the United States in doing so does not express any opinion as to the course to be taken by the states of

Europe," and desired to express its determination "to refrain from enunciating opinions upon matters into which, as they concern Europe alone, the United States has no claim to enter."

Though taking this position, the delegation went so far as to vote for the Bourgeois resolution, couched in the following words: "The Committee considers that a limitation of the military charges which now weigh upon the world is greatly to be desired in the interests of the material and moral welfare of humanity." This resolution was adopted by the Conference as a whole.

At the present time no satisfactory reason can be conceived for the continuance of this attitude of our government. It was, in our view, an untenable one even then, resulting more from timidity and calculating reserve than from reluctance to meddle with what was considered purely the business of Europe. The question of armaments was already at that time a world question on which the United States had both the right and the duty to make itself heard. The feeble position which it took was probably the determining factor in the refusal of the Conference to go further in the direction of the Russian proposals than it did. It has likewise led to very unfortunate results both for this country and Europe in the further development of the armaments then recognized to weigh so heavily upon the world.

But whatever may have been the case at that time, all reason for the attitude then taken has passed, and there are several very strong grounds why the opposite attitude should be assumed. The resolution adopted at The Hague, as quoted above, has laid upon all the governments, the United States among the rest, the obligation to make a more serious examination of the question than has yet been attempted. This obligation cannot be fulfilled by a mere negative position. Furthermore, the rivalry of armaments has continued, and the burdens imposed by them to-day are much heavier upon the world than they were when the Bourgeois resolution was adopted. Their limitation is now more imperative than it was then.

Besides this, the growth of the United States navy has made the question a vital and urgent one for this country. When the dozen or more battle-ships, the large number of cruisers and the many smaller war craft now under construction are completed, our navy will be, all things considered, the third and possibly the second in the world. The

rivalry of armaments has transferred itself largely to the sea, where the navy of this country is constantly in evidence. Our government can therefore no longer say with any sincerity that this is a matter "into which it has no claim to enter." We are already in the thing itself, up to our ears; and if there is to be any arrest of armaments, it cannot take place without this country's coöperation. The suggestion of President Roosevelt in his recent Message, and of Secretary Bonaparte in his Annual Report, that no more vessels need be ordered constructed at the present time, will remain only a suggestion if Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan and Russia continue their naval expansion, as they will surely do unless some general agreement is come to for a simultaneous limitation.

For these reasons our government ought to go into the new Hague Conference determined and prepared to take an advanced position and to do the most serious work on the whole problem. The big trio of questions with which the Conference will have to deal will be that of a general treaty of obligatory arbitration, the creation of a regular congress of the nations, and a limitation of military and naval expenses. Other questions will demand attention, but these three will constitute the centre of interest. Our government is preparing to take advanced ground on the first two, and will, it is confidently hoped, be able to secure most important results in both directions for "the material and moral welfare of humanity." It can do the same in the matter of armaments if it takes hold of the subject in sincerity and earnestness.

What was accomplished by the Portsmouth Conference, when all the world was standing aghast and helpless before the awful ravages and butcheries of the Manchurian war, has revealed to us and to all men the enormous beneficent power which our government is able to wield in world affairs whenever it is ready to take a strong and rational lead. The most urgent problem of the nations to-day, try to dodge it as one may, is, by nearly universal consent, just this problem of an arrest of the armaments which constitute the chief burden and menace to humanity. To bring the nations to a halt in this matter, to a united effort to relieve themselves from the burdens and perils of their self-imposed "armed peace," would be an achievement before which the Portsmouth deed, great and praiseworthy as it was, would pale into insignificance.

The time has come, and more than come, for the first step to be taken toward the accomplishment of this momentous task. We believe that our own government, by reason of its character and present standing before the world, is peculiarly marked out as the divinely commissioned agent to inaugurate the movement. Shall the opportunity be missed? If so, the initiative will be taken elsewhere. Nothing fuller

of significance has been uttered recently in the political world than the remarks of the new British Prime Minister, in his campaign speech, on this very subject:

"As the principle of peaceful arbitration extends, it becomes one of the highest tasks of statesmanship to adjust these armaments to the new and happier conditions. No nobler rôle could this great country have than at the fitting moment to put itself at the head of a league of peace-through whose instrumentality this great work could be effected."

This utterance has set all Europe to thinking and talking, pro and con. And all Europe, we incline to believe, will think and talk itself quickly round to Sir Henry's mind, that these armaments must be speedily adjusted to the new conditions. That means limitation; and it means reduction. That the head of the British government, a practical statesman, who is being overwhelmingly supported by the British people, should have let this sentiment pass his lips at the very opening of his election campaign, is sufficient evidence of the urgent and commanding nature of the question. Is Sir Henry to take the lead at The Hague in the effort to accomplish this "one of the highest tasks of statesmanship"? He could do nothing greater for the honor of his country and the welfare of humanity. If the President of the United States would take the same stand as the British Premier has done, and when the time comes instruct the men whom he sends to The Hague to accomplish something in the way of limitation of armaments, the thing would be done.

The Third International American Conference.

The date of the third International Conference of the American Republics has already been fixed. At the regular meeting* of the Council of Administration of the International Bureau of the American Republics, held on the 6th of December last in the Diplomatic Hall of the State Department at Washington, the Brazilian Ambassador, Joaquin Nabuco, on behalf of his government, extended an invitation to the American Republics to meet at Rio Janeiro on the 21st of July next, for the third International American Conference. The invitation was accepted unanimously, and arrangements have begun to be made for the Conference.

The governments represented in the meeting of the Council of Administration of the Bureau were the United States, Brazil, Mexico, Haiti, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Chile, Bolivia, Guatemala, Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, Paraguay and Ecuador—fifteen in all. Secretary Root presided, and in accordance with the instructions of the Council has appointed the following committees:

(1) A committee to prepare the program of the Conference. The members of this committee are